

1. Desertification became well known in the 1930's, when parts of the Great Plains in the United States turned into the "Dust Bowl" as a result of drought and poor practices in farming, although the term itself was not used until almost 1950. During the dust bowl period, millions of people were forced to abandon their farms and livelihoods. Greatly improved methods of agriculture and land and water management in the Great Plains have prevented that disaster from recurring, but desertification presently affects millions of people in almost every continent.

2. The tree and plant cover that binds the soil is removed. It occurs when trees and bushes are stripped away for fuelwood and timber, or to clear land for cultivation.

Animals eat away grasses and erode topsoil with their hooves. Overgrazing was not as large of a problem long ago because animals would move in response to rainfall. People would move with the animals so it prevented overgrazing in such areas. Now, humans have a steady food supply so they do not have to move about. Therefore, people use fences to keep their animals in one place which causes overgrazing.

Intensive farming depletes the nutrients in the soil. Farming of average land is causing desertification worldwide. Farmers are clearing average land, and using it which takes away the richness in the soil. People should let the average land replenish itself before farming.

Wind and water erosion aggravate the damage, carrying away topsoil and leaving behind a highly infertile mix of dust and sand. It is the combination of these factors that transforms degraded land into desert.

Incorrect irrigation is commonly used in poorer areas. Farmers are using canal irrigation and other poor techniques because of the lack of water. This type of irrigation causes a build up of salt in the soil.

3. Loosened soil may bury plants or leave their roots exposed. Also, when overgrazing occurs, plant species may be lost.

The soil can be blown away by wind or washed away rain. Nutrients in the soil can be removed by wind or water. Salt can build up in the soil which makes it harder for plant growth.

Drylands are already fragile. As they become degraded, the impact on people, livestock and environment can be devastating. Some 50 million people may be displaced within the next 10 years as a result of desertification.

Places that have war and poverty are most likely to have famine occur. Drought and poor land management contribute to famine. Places that have war and poverty are most likely to have famine occur. Drought and poor land management contribute to famine.

Desertification can cause flooding, poor water quality, dust storms, and pollution. All of these effects can hurt people living near an affected region.

